

**Abstract 552**

**TITLE:** Integrating STDs into HIV Education and Counseling: A Skill-Building Exercise for Trainers, Counselors, and Educators

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**ISSUE:** Among the effective interventions available for the prevention of STDs, including HIV, are health education and counseling to support voluntary changes in sexual and drug use behaviors that put people at risk. Training for HIV counselors, educators and outreach workers on the frontlines in community-based and public clinics should include information and skills building to address all STDs. Experiential exercises, which require the training participant to recall new information, integrate this information in new ways, and articulate the information, can enhance learning and increase effectiveness of health education interventions.

**SETTING:** The California STD/HIV Prevention Training Center (CA/PTC) is located in Berkeley, California. The CA/PTC conducts experiential, skills-focused training designed for persons who conduct HIV/STD counseling, risk reduction education and outreach, and family planning services.

**PROJECT:** The CA/PTC presents the "STD-HIV Chance Exercise" in its courses. The exercise challenges participants to recall, integrate, respond, and examine the specific wording commonly used by health care providers and educators to articulate "risk messages." The result is an activity which reinforces the STD information presented while simultaneously revealing the varied and inconsistent messages too often given by health care providers and educators. This exercise demonstrates the need for HIV/STD counselors and educators to meet, discuss, and resolve any inconsistencies or contradictions in the "risk messages" given to their target populations.

**RESULTS:** Experience conducting the "Chance Exercise" in specific CA/PTC courses has been that participant learning was enhanced in several ways, including increased ability to understand some of the difficulties created by use of the term "risk" when discussing the chances for STD or HIV infection with clients, increased awareness of inconsistent messages delivered to target populations, and development of skills for articulating prevention messages to clients, as well as facilitating an interactive training activity.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** Participating in the "Chance Exercise" helps participants understand how STD/HIV prevention messages can be integrated, and fosters greater awareness of clients' susceptibility to all of the STDs.

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